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Director of
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Soviet Strategic Offensive Land-Based Mobile Missile Programs

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Interagency Intelligence Memorandum
Volume I—Highlights and Summary

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April 1988

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SOVIET STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE LAND-BASED MOBILE MISSILE PROGRAMS

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VOLUME I—HIGHLIGHTS AND SUMMARY

Information available as of 31 December 1987 was used in the preparation of this Memorandum. This Memorandum was approved for publication on 19 April 1988 by the Chairman of the National Intelligence Council.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Force Structure. As of December 1987, the Soviets had a wartime deployed force SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) road-mobile SS-25 ICBMs, had begun deploying the SS-24 rail-mobile ICBM, and were in the final stages of developing a long-range ground-launched cruise missile, the SSC-X-4. Land-mobile strategic missiles pose substantial intelligence, targeting, and arms control monitoring problems for the United States and will continue to do so, assuming they are not effectively banned by arms control agreements.

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all-source analysis indicate that, for purposes of maintaining security and reliability, the Soviets will seek to use landline cable to the maximum extent possible during crisis and wartime.

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SCOPE NOTE

This Memorandum, the first to focus on Soviet strategic offensive land-mobile missile systems, is intended to satisfy two overall requirements:

— First, to provide a vehicle for the fusion of the most significant research and analysis ongoing throughout the Intelligence Community. Although some of the analytical judgments included in this report have appeared in other national-level interagency products, such as the National Intelligence Estimate 11-3/8 series, others have been published only by individual agencies. Moreover, a large portion of the analysis contained in this Memorandum has never before been formally disseminated. As such, this Memorandum reflects the state of the art in our understanding of a wide range of issues related to the topic.

— The second objective of this Memorandum is the development of key substantive judgments vital to a range of intelligence consumers concerned with the formulation of policy and program options. To this end, a separate chapter on mobile missile targeting has been included. By limiting its scope to substantive intelligence issues, this Memorandum was designed to avoid duplication of work ongoing in other Department of Defense and interagency groups concerned with policy and program development. In addition, we have refrained from any in-depth discussion of the arms control implications posed by mobile missiles, deferring to the treatment presented in NIE 4/11-88, "US Capabilities To Monitor Arms Control Limitations on Soviet Strategic Forces."

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Shortly before final interagency coordination of this Memorandum, the USSR provided to the United States a wide variety of information on their intermediate-range nuclear forces—notably the SS-20 IRBM and the SSC-X-4 GLCM. This data was provided as of 1 November 1987 in a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the data base for the INF Treaty (see NIE 4/11-88 for a review of the Soviet-supplied data). The Soviets supplied totals of deployed and nondeployed missiles and launchers and a breakdown that identifies the items by system and location. All SS-20 IRBMs and the SSC-X-4 GLCMs are scheduled to be destroyed according to a three-year timetable once the INF Treaty is ratified.

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This Memorandum is being published in two parts; Volume I contains the Highlights and Summary and Volume II includes the extensive supporting analyses.

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SUMMARY

By roughly the middle of the next decade, a substantial portion of the USSR's intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) strike assets will be mobile. Already today most of its long-range ballistic missile strike capability against Europe is carried on modern land-mobile launchers.

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Taken as a whole, these land-mobile strategic missiles pose substantial intelligence, targeting, and arms control monitoring problems for the United States and will continue to do so, assuming they are not effectively banned by arms control agreements.

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Mobility for ballistic missile forces has been a goal of Soviet planners since the inception of the Soviet ballistic missile program after World War II. This was first manifested in the development of short-range ballistic missiles assigned to Ground Forces units. The first truly mobile land-based strategic missiles, the SS-14 medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) and SS-X-15 ICBM—which were never fully deployed—shared a common technology base and used some of the same missile booster stages as the silo-based SS-13 ICBM; all three were designed by the same design bureau in the 1950s. Over the next two decades, the SS-16 mobile ICBM similarly has generated a family of mobile missile systems—as in the case of the SS-13—that has included a modified variant of the SS-16, the SS-20 IRBM, and ultimately the SS-25 ICBM.

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The three-reentry vehicle (RV) SS-20 IRBM and the single-RV SS-25 ICBM are solid-propellant missiles that are deployed—only in the USSR—in regimental size units, most of which have nine launchers. Both of these mobile missiles are carried on, and launched from, road-mobile transporter-erector-launchers (TELs) that are housed in single-bay garages. The SS-24 is a three-stage, solid-propellant 10-RV ICBM

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The Soviets will deploy a number of these missiles in a rail-mobile mode, apparently in trains that include three launchers each.

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GLCM, a variant of the sea-launched SS-N-21 long-range land-attack cruise missile, is judged to have a maximum range of 3,500 km, an operational range of 2,500 km, and a terrain contour matching (TERCOM) type navigation system; it is apparently launched from a six-tube, road-mobile launcher that, in many respects, is similar to the US GLCM launcher.

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Future Systems. We estimate that, at a minimum, further modifications were probably being developed for the SS-20,

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Operational Planning. Soviet strategic force operations are guided by a unified strike plan that integrates the peacetime, crisis, and wartime employment objectives of the combined strategic nuclear forces. This plan, formulated by the General Staff, coordinates strategic strikes against wartime nuclear objectives throughout the intercontinental and continental theaters.

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Both of the currently deployed land-mobile strategic missiles, the SS-20 Mod 1 IRBM and the SS-25 ICBM, appear to have been designed for attacks against unhardened and moderately hardened area and cluster targets. Neither of these road-mobile systems, nor the currently tested version of the rail-mobile SS-24 ICBM, has the requisite combination of accuracy and warhead yield to reliably attack hardened point targets at maximum range. Of the current land-mobile missile generation, only the SSC-X-4 GLCM is assessed to have the characteristics required for a hardened point target kill capability. In addition, accuracy and warhead yield improvements incorporated in the SS-20 Mod 2 IRBM (which could be deployed soon) provide this system with a marginal hard-target kill capability.

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The SS-25 road-mobile ICBM offers Soviet military planners enhanced capability for protracted nuclear war. The SS-25 is a highly survivable and flexible system; its single RV eliminates retargeting constraints associated with MIRVed systems and thus optimizes the planning and employment flexibility of the system in a reserve role. For these reasons, we judge that the Soviets probably intend to employ the SS-25 primarily—though not necessarily exclusively—as a strategic reserve; deep cuts in any prospective START agreement that permitted mobile ICBMs could change that.

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